

HISTORY
OF
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF ASHTABULA, OHIO.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS PASTORATE,
JULY 30, 1876.

BY REV. J. N. MCGIFFERT

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY THE SESSION.

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Deuteronomy viii, 2; "THOU SHALT REMEMBER ALL THE WAY WHICH THE LORD THY GOD LED THEE."

The Lord Jehovah is in all the past. Its record is the transcript of His just government, and of His ever-mindful providence.

True, the human has been in it always; tho weak, sinning, erring human; and it were not strange if men would gladly forget many of their own doings, although the recording angel has written them "with a pen of iron and with a point of diamond."

But the Divine has been in it supremely; creating, preserving, directing, overruling, working out the glorious counsels of the Infinite will. And wherever God has gone is worth retracing; and whatever God has done is worth recalling.

The highest use of history is its record of Divine Providence. True history is not a vain-glorious recording of human achievements; it is an obedience to a Divine injunction. The text is its warrant: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee."

Israel was a nation, and the text is a warrant for the preservation and study of national records. Israel was a church, also; the only church of the living God. And it was Israel's churchly position which gave such high importance to their national life. But for this their records would have been no more valuable than those of the many nations of their age which have gone down into oblivion. Yet of such consequence were Jehovah's dealings with them that He insured the preservation of their history by Divine inspiration, and set it with the commandments of His law in the oracles of God.

For the church is, in God's sight, of vastly higher importance than the nation. The national life is founded and sustained for the sake of the church. Kings are her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers; and the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought to her.

There is no history, therefore, so important as the history of Christ's church. God led his ancient church in the wilderness by the pillar of fire and cloud. God fed his church with the manna, and brought the water from the rock. God cast out the nations before his church, and caused her to inherit the land. All this was done for Israel, because Israel was the church of God. And as for the ancient church, so for the church since Christ came. God has led her through the centuries. The ages past are the record of the Divine care and help.

But God's care for Israel was not a general watch over the nation. It was a special care of every tribe and family. And so the Divine guardianship is not only a general care of the broad kingdom of Christ, but of that kingdom in all its branches; of every little seion of the tree, of every little company of believers which, in any community, have joined together for Christ, as His church, confessing him before the world. The record of any particular church is a record of the Divine care; of the way in which God has led a band of His people.

It is not, then, a matter of indifference whether a church keeps its records, or endeavors to preserve its history. There is a divine injunction laid on the company of believers: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee."

Our General Assembly has wisely required its ministers, in this year when so much national history is being written, to write the history of the church over which God has placed them. And in considering the history of this branch of Christ's church, which is our own family among the tribes of God's Israel, this Presbyterian church of Ashtabula, we are obeying at once the Divine requirement, and the authority which Christ has given His Church, bidding us contribute our mite to the grand and glorious history of the Presbyterian church in these United States, and of the one Holy Catholic church throughout the world.

I ask you, then, to-day, to remember the way in which God has led you. My pleasurable duty has been to inquire of the fathers and mothers in our Israel, and to search out from the records of our scribes, God's dealings with us as a church; God's blessing on us. My work to-day is to talk with you of the way in which God has led you these fifty and five years; to point out to you the pillar of cloud and fire which has gone before you; to tell you of the manna with which God has fed you, and the water bursting, sometimes, in the midst of your discouragement, as from the flinty rock; to record for you the miracles of grace which Jehovah has wrought, and the triumphs which you have achieved through him; to remind you how the weak has become strong, and through a wilderness often of fears and difficulties and many trials, the Lord has brought you into a broad place, of honored position, and large opportunity, and wide influence for Christ.

But in attempting to write this history I have been met at once and beset constantly with the impossibility of recalling the forgotten. The fathers of our church trusted too much to memory to hand down by tradition, and have left few and sparse records where much might have been written worthy of our remembrance. I have endeavored, so far as possible, to fill up this void of record, by reliable information

obtained from various sources. One record, however, seems to have been kept perfectly through all the years : that of admissions into the communion of the church. And such record, as showing what God has done through them in bringing souls to Christ, is the most valuable portion of the history of any church.

I will say nothing of the settlement of our town, or of its early religious history, except in one special direction ; as others have written of this, and placed the results of their research in permanent printed records. I will trace out, from as early a period as practicable, only such religious efforts and work as were preparing the way for our own church organization, and which, therefore, properly belong to our ecclesiastical history.

Toward the close of the year 1800, Rev. Joseph Badger, under commission as a Missionary of the Connecticut Missionary Society, reached the Western Reserve, and on the last Sabbath of that year preached in Youngstown. From that time, for several years, he traveled from place to place, throughout the Reserve, and beyond it, suffering many hardships from the unsettled state of the country, but faithfully preaching Christ wherever he could find a small company of hearers. I extract a single sentence from his diary, recording a journey made by him and his family in 1802, to give such of you as have not read the accounts of those early days an idea of this section at that time. He writes :

"We had passed in this journey more than two hundred miles through a wilderness, with but here and there a log cabin, where we could spread our beds upon the rough hewn floor; and from Buffalo to the Pennsylvania line, seventy miles, there being no cabin on the route, we cut our path by day, pitched our tent by night, and slept safely in the woods."

Mr. Badger visited Ashtabula in 1802, but the first record of his preaching here is in January, 1804. He writes of this : "Monday, rode to Ashtabula settlement, and preached to about twenty people." His next visit was a year later, of which he says, more fully : "Preached at the Ridge Settlement, Ashtabula." In April, 1810, he removed to this place, making it his home until the Spring of 1822, and for the greater part of that period, preaching here half of the time. He was, practically, through those years, the first minister of our church, though the church was not yet organized. The communicants in his congregation in Ashtabula belonged principally to the church in Kingsville, and were very few in number. He preached, part of the time, in the building now called Firemen's Hall, and more frequently in a store, one of which is yet standing.

In the fall of 1821, Mr. Badger ceased preaching regularly in Ashtabula, and his congregation engaged Rev. Perry Pratt as their minister. Whether he was sent to them by a Missionary Society, or invited by the people themselves, we are not informed. He was a young man; probably, at this time, unordained. When Mr. Pratt had labored a few weeks, his people decided to separate from the Kingsville church and become an independent organization. Accordingly, as the record reads:

"A meeting was held December 6th, 1821, at the house of Hall Smith, in Ashtabula, for the purpose of examining some persons with a view to their being organized into a church in this town. The Rev. Messrs. Joseph Badger and Giles H. Cowles being present, the meeting was opened with prayer by Mr. Badger, when were present Messrs. Joshua Nettleton and Lot Newell and Mrs. Sally Macdonald, members of the church in Kingsville; Widow Anna Carter, member of the church in Sandisfield; Mrs. Lydia Hall, member of the church in Dover; Mrs. Tabitha Smith, member of the church in Sullivan; Mrs. Jerusha Cook, member of the church in Lisle; Mrs. Hannah Blackmore. Having ascertained that those who were members had been dismissed, in regular standing, from the churches to which they belonged, and having, by examination, been satisfied with respect to their religious sentiments, and their qualifications for church membership, it was agreed to organize them into a church to-morrow afternoon at the close of a sermon."

"December 7th, 1821. All the persons, excepting Mrs. Blackmore, who yesterday offered themselves for admission, were, after sermon, organized into a church. Test, Giles H. Cowles, Missionary."

The reason for the exception of Mrs. Blackmore was that she was not a communicant in any church. On the following Sabbath, two days later, she was received on confession of her faith.

The house of Hall Smith, where the organization took place, is the present residence of Geo. Willard.

The church, as thus organized, consisted of seven communicants, two males and five females. Such was the small beginning of our Zion. In weakness, but in faith, these fathers and mothers of our Israel laid the foundation of our church; few in numbers, but strong in the Holy Ghost, to prove in the work which God should do through them the truth of the never-failing promise: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

The hand that wrote this record which I have given has long been still in death. The Missionary who gathered the feeble flock rests from his labors. The young minister of Christ in whose care the little church was placed has gone to his reward. The seven who were formed into this church are with the church in glory. The first, Mrs. Anna Carter, died August 2d, 1822; the last, Mr. Lot Newell, September 8th, 1860.

The fathers and mothers have gone, but they have left a priceless legacy. This church of God; the preaching and worship of over half a century; the souls which have been brought to Christ through the work which they wrought; the history of God's dealings which we are reviewing to-day.

At that time the population of our village was scarce over one hundred and fifty, while the surrounding country was very sparsely settled. Two other church organizations had already been established: the Episcopal and Methodist.

The church, as most of the churches of our order, in this section, at that time, was formed on the basis of the Plan of Union, adopted in 1801, by the Association of Connecticut and our General Assembly. In accordance with provisions of that plan, its name and connection were Presbyterian, while its internal government was Congregational. It was received under the care of the Presbytery of Grand River, then embracing a large part of the Western Reserve, and remained in this connection till that Presbytery was dissolved, and its churches transferred to the

Presbytery of Cleveland, after the reunion, in 1870, of the two branches of the Presbyterian church.

In November, following the organization of the church, three persons were received into its communion, and in the ensuing year seven more. The ministry of Mr. Pratt continued till the spring of 1826. He received twenty-three into the church, all but four on confession of faith. The number of communicants at the close of his ministry was twenty-seven. Mr. Pratt preached afterwards in Geneva, and then in Braceville, where he died between the years 1840 and 1850.

There was no stated preaching until the Fall of 1826, when Rev. Urban Palmer became Stated Supply and remained some six or eight months. There is no record of a church meeting during his short ministry. None were added and none were dismissed. Mr. Palmer appears to have had a partial care of the church for a year afterward, as his name occurs in connection with a business meeting and a communion service. He died within a few years after leaving this place.

In September, 1828, after a vacancy of some eighteen months, in which time five were added to the church, Rev. Henry Cowles became their minister, and remained till November, 1829. During his ministry there were eleven additions. The number of communicants at its close was thirty-eight.

Mr. Cowles, now Rev. Henry Cowles, D. D., of Oberlin, beside furnishing me with information as to others of our early ministers, writes thus of his work here and his labors since :

"I think there were eight male members in the church when I began, of whom I recall the names of James Hall, Charles Crosby, A. Manly, Jackson, Nettleton, Lot Newell, Wm. Humphrey; the eighth may have been McDonald. Several were added in the summer of 1820. We worshiped alternately on each side of the creek. The force of the church, numerically and spiritually, was in the sisters. Their help was invaluable. I shall remember their labors, sympathies and prayers as long as I live. From Ashtabula I went to Sandusky City for five or six months, then to Austinburg five years, and in Oberlin forty-one. My work here has been various: teaching in the College, in the Seminary, labors upon the Oberlin *Evangelist*, and since 1863, writing Commentaries."

Dr. Cowles is well known throughout our country, through his faithful labors, and especially through the valuable Commentaries which he has written on several of the books of Scripture.

After the departure of Mr. Cowles, no effort seems to have been made to secure a successor, but the church entered into an arrangement with the Baptist church to attend worship with them and assist in the support of their ministers. This arrangement continued for two and a half years, during which time Rev. M. Fairfield and Rev. H. Newman were the ministers of the Baptist church. During 1832, and the larger part of 1833, the Baptists were without regular preaching. In 1832, our people secured the services of Rev. Elbert Scott, who continued with them for one year. In the interval between the ministry of Mr. Cowles and that of Mr. Scott, but one member was added to the church. During the year of Mr. Scott's labors, fifteen were added, all but four by letter. Mr. Scott labored afterwards in Wakeman, then in Kelloggsville, and at a somewhat early period in life, retired from the ministry.

Soon after the departure of Mr. Scott, the Baptist church having secured the services of Rev. Asahel Chapin, our church entered into the former arrangement with them. Mr. Chapin was a young man, not then ordained, but full of ardor for his work and zeal for souls. Within a short time after the commencement of his labors, an evident spiritual interest was aroused, which was soon followed by a precious refreshing from God's Spirit. During the first year of his ministry, the membership of the Baptist church was increased from about fifty to eighty-four, and during the second year to one hundred. Our church, worshiping with them, shared in their blessing. Quite a number connected with our congregation were hopefully converted. The zeal of the church was quickened and their faith encouraged. They felt the need for these young converts of a pastor and a home of their own, and discerned the call of God to their own proper, independent work as a church of Christ.

We have now reached a transition point in our history. Up to this time our church had certainly endured much and varied discouragement. The Holy Spirit had not withheld all tokens of His blessing; yet the Pillar of Fire had often been seen dimly, and the people of Christ had felt constrained to ask: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" I note the characteristics of this long period of discouragement, that we may learn from the experience of the fathers the many reasons which we have for faith and thanksgiving. During these twelve years the church possessed no sanctuary. Store and hall took the place of a consecrated house of God. Their ministry was unsettled and changing; none of their Stated Supplies, with the exception of Mr. Pratt, remaining with them more than fourteen months. For four out of the twelve years they were altogether destitute. They were without regular church officers. They had enjoyed no revival of religion; and in four of the years there had been no addition to the church. They had grown, it is true, from their original weakness, but their progress had been slow; the total membership at the opening of 1834, being probably less than fifty.

But with that reviving under the labors of Mr. Chapin, a new era began, in which the church grew rapidly to a position of comparative strength and influence in the community. In May, 1834, the services of Rev. H. Root were secured; and soon after, the fruits of the refreshing were gathered in. In June, twenty-one were added to the church, and in the entire year twenty-nine; twelve of them on confession. The congregation now decided to proceed to the erection of a house of worship, encouraged to this by the accession of members, and by the generous gift of \$1,000 by Nehemiah Hubbard, of Middletown, Conn.

Before building, they obtained a charter as a religious society under the laws of the State, which is dated Dec. 17th, 1834. By this charter, Wm. Hubbard, Russel Clark and William Humphrey were appointed Trustees till the first annual meeting of the Society, which was held March 2d, 1835, when William Humphrey, William Hubbard and Abijah Southwick were elected Trustees and O. H. Fitch was chosen Clerk. On the 15th of January, 1835, the following resolution was passed:

Resolved, That it is expedient to build a house of public worship for the use of the Society; and that the Trustees be requested to make exertions to obtain funds by

voluntary subscription, and to take such other measures as may be necessary to secure its erection during the next season."

Meanwhile, the church had proceeded toward a more complete organization; and on Dec. 26th, 1834, William Hubbard and Moses Ingersoll were elected Deacons. Mr. Ingersoll continued in office until he removed from the vicinity in October, 1837, and Mr. Hubbard till his death, Feb. 24th, 1863. I add, in this connection, a complete list of the Deacons who have served our church. Jesse McDonald was ordained in 1838, and died in 1858; in which year John P. Robertson was appointed his successor. John Mansfield was ordained in 1860, and Benjamin Merriam in 1869. They remained in office until 1872, when Mr. Mansfield was dismissed to the Second Church of Cleveland, and Mr. Merriam was removed by death. Andrew G. Snyder was ordained in 1870. The present Deacons are Mr. Robertson and Mr. Snyder.

Rev. Mr. Root continued with the church but one year. Soon afterward he removed to Michigan, and, probably, is not now living. A vacancy of a year followed, during which the church was not idle; but while engaged in building a sanctuary, were also blessed by the addition of eleven to their number, ten of these by letter.

In May, 1836, Rev. Ira Smith became stated supply. Meanwhile, the church edifice had been brought nearly to completion; and on June 23d, 1836, it was dedicated to the worship of the Trinne God. It is the same building as our present sanctuary, although so much altered and improved twenty years ago, that it was at that time rededicated. Immediately after the dedication of the church, a protracted meeting was held, in which the evangelist, Rev. O. Parker, assisted; and fifty persons were added to the church in July and September, on confession of their faith in Christ. During the year, sixteen more were added by letter.

The labors of Mr. Smith closed in May, 1838, seventy-one persons having been received during his ministry, on confession, and eighteen by letter; and the total number of communicants having reached something over one hundred and twenty. He went from this place to Anstinburg, afterward to Oberlin, and died several years ago.

Mr. Smith was succeeded almost immediately by Rev. Robert H. Conklin, who remained with the church until October, 1839. During his ministry twenty were added, nine on confession. He preached afterward, among other places, in Providence, R. I., and in the Congregational church of Ashtabula from 1860 to 1864. He died in Dec., 1865.

Mr. Conklin was succeeded Dec. 1st, 1839, by Rev. Dewitt Sterry. In consequence of failing health, Mr. Sterry was obliged to resign on March 1st, 1841, having been unable to do any pastoral work for some time previous. Four were received during his ministry, all by letter. Mr. Sterry went from here to Geneva, and afterward to Minnesota, in which State he is preaching at the present time.

Rev. John Ingersoll became Stated Supply in May, 1841, and remained for one year. The additions to the church were eighteen, nine of these on confession. We have a complete list of the communi-

cants made out in 1842, showing the total number in communion to have been one hundred and eighteen. Mr. Ingersoll has been dead for a number of years.

On July 4th, 1842, Rev. Seth H. Waldo became minister of the church, and remained for four years. During the first two years a considerable degree of religious interest and success accompanied his labors; fifteen being added on confession in 1843, and fourteen in 1844. The entire additions during his ministry were sixty-one; thirty-three of them on confession. The number of communicants at its close was one hundred and thirty-six. Mr. Waldo preached afterward at different points in this State and Illinois, and has for nine years been engaged in teaching in Geneseo, Illinois.

With the ministry of Mr. Waldo there came to a close for our church a system in the employment of their ministers which they had adopted at the first, the unstable and injurious system of Stated Supplies. During these twenty-five years, there had been no settled Pastor, the minister being employed by the church or society year by year. As a consequence of these weak and unscriptural bonds, or rather of this absence of all bonds, the ministry, as you have noticed, had been exceedingly changeable. In this first quarter of a century, ten ministers, in succession, had taken charge of the church. The people had scarce time to become acquainted with him, or the Shepherd to gain an influence over his flock, before he removed to another community. Two of these Supplies remained for a comparatively long period; the first, Mr. Pratt, for four and a half years; the last, Mr. Waldo, for four. The ministry of the others varied from six months to two years. It is remarkable that under such a system the church gained as much as it did in numbers and strength.

But, naturally and wisely, the people had grown weary of this state of affairs; and on October 6, 1846, the Society passed the following Resolution:

Resolved, That it is the duty of this Society to procure a minister with a view to permanently settle the same after suitable time, (in case of mutual agreement)."

Under this resolution a call was extended to Rev. J. W. Barnes, but was declined by him. On Jan. 25, 1847, it was resolved to call Rev. Augustus Pomeroy, of Fredonia, N. Y. The call was accepted by Mr. Pomeroy, who commenced his labors, Feb. 14, 1847, and was installed by the Presbytery of Grand River the *first Pastor* of the church.

In connection with this desire for a settled Pastorate, there was also on the part of many in the church a desire for a stronger organization and more efficient management of the church affairs. This desire expressed itself at the first meeting after Mr. Pomeroy's settlement in the adoption by the church of the following Resolution:

"Resolved, That there should be a Committee of five members of the Church appointed who shall attend to the examination and reception of members, to cases of discipline, &c.; said Committee to be appointed annually."

On March 5, the following persons were elected as such Committee: Zebediah Dennison, Matthew D. Culley, James Hall, Amasa Savage,

Judson L. Newell. The Deacons of the Church were afterwards added as ex-officio members. The records of the church meetings indicate very clearly the benefit which accrued to the spirituality and efficiency of the church through the labors and reports of these successive Committees.

This system was continued for four years, when it led, naturally, to an organization much more stable and effective. On Oct. 4, 1850, the Committee recommended to the church the adoption of the usages and forms of the Presbyterian government. The question was thoroughly considered at three successive meetings called for the purpose; and on Nov. 22, 1850, the following action was taken: "In view of the past, present and prospective state of this church, after mature deliberation, it is our judgment that the edification of all the great ends for which the church is instituted will be better secured by the usages and forms of the Presbyterian government, therefore

Resolved, That we adopt the order and discipline of the Presbyterian church as presented in their form of church government. That we proceed to the election of six Elders."

In accordance with this Resolution the following persons were elected by ballot to the office of Ruling Elders in the church: William Hubbard, Jesse F. McDonald, Orramel H. Fitch, John P. Robertson, James Hall, Matthew D. Culley. These individuals were duly ordained to the office by Rev. A. Pomeroy, on Sabbath morning, Dec. 7, 1850; and thus the organization of the church, with all the three orders of the Christian ministry, was completed just thirty-nine years after its formation.

Mr. Hubbard and Mr. McDonald continued in office till their death; Mr. Culley until 1851, and Mr. Hall until 1854. Messrs. Fitch and Robertson perform their duties still. Besides these original Elders, Henry Fassett was elected in 1851, and served until 1860; Lewis Gilbert from 1853 to 1856; John Sill from 1854 to 1870; John Mansfield from 1856 to 1872; Henry Cheney from 1859 to 1865; Geo. C. Hubbard from 1864 to 1867. Lewis M. Crosby, elected in 1868, Charles E. Bruce in 1869, John W. Haskell in 1870, and Andrew G. Snyder in 1873, continue with us in the exercise of their office.

At the time of the adoption of this resolution, action was taken continuing in a measure a mixed form of government, allowing an appeal in certain cases from the Session to the Church, instead of to the Presbytery, as required by our Book. No member of the church ever availed himself of this permission, and the action was formally revoked in 1869, and the organization and rules brought into complete accordance with the order of the Presbyterian church.

During the first four years of Mr. Pomeroy's ministry the additions to the church were comparatively few. Toward the close of 1850, the Pastor was assisted by the Evangelist, Rev. Mr. Day, and a protracted meeting was held for some weeks. In 1851, fifty-two were added on confession. The Pastorate of Mr. Pomeroy closed April 25, 1852. There were received into the church during his ministry eighty-nine in all; sixty of these on confession. The number of communicants at the close

of his labors was about one hundred and sixty. Mr. Pomeroy, after removing from this church, took charge of the church at Groton, N. Y., where he remained until his death, in March, 1875. The dismissal of Mr. Pomeroy was followed by a vacancy of over a year, during which the pulpit was supplied for some six months by Rev. R. H. Conklin, to whom the church presented an urgent call to the Pastorate, which he declined.

On May 25, 1853, a call was given to Rev. J. Mills Gillett, of Painesville, which he accepted, commencing his labors immediately. Mr. Gillett was shortly after installed the *second pastor* of the church by the Presbytery of Grand River. In 1857 the church edifice was repaired at an expense of about \$2,200. The alterations were so radical and complete as to make internally, substantially another sanctuary; which was dedicated anew to the worship of God in October, 1857.

Following this improvement, the congregation increased largely, and much religious interest soon became manifest. Early in 1858, a series of evening meetings was held three times each week, and daily morning prayer meetings for about twelve weeks. These faithful labors resulted in an ingathering into the church, during 1858, of thirty-eight communicants, twenty of them on confession. In 1860, the number of communicants had reached one hundred and sixty-eight.

For some time previous there had been a growing diversity of opinion as to certain questions, among the membership of the church. On May 7, 1860, a number of the communicants applied to the Session for letters of dismission for the purpose of organizing a Congregational church, and letters were granted to forty-one. Three others, during the year, took letters to the new organization. We will not inquire for the reasons that led to this separation. As in all similar church divisions, where the growth of the community and the breadth of the work do not call for a new organization, there were, doubtless, mistakes and wrong feelings on both sides; such as earnest, though good men sometimes fall into in the bitterness of controversy. But we can afford to let the mantle of oblivion, which sixteen years have been weaving, fall over the errors. Life is too short to cherish the memory of divisions, while we are hastening toward the glorious reunion. Christian influence is too precious to waste it in strife among brethren, while the work of Christ calls for all the thought and energy of all his people. We welcome them as brethren in the Lord in our sanctuary to-day. Our history in those first forty years is theirs. We are children of one parentage. God forbid that we should cherish feelings of strife or envy; but may these two churches, each in its own sphere, yet in the spirit of Christian love one toward another, go forward in the fulfillment of their appointed mission for our common Lord.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, God did not forget his people. There was the average addition to our church in 1860 and 1861, and in the years following, to the close of Mr. Gillett's pastorate. On Oct. 27, 1865, the pastoral relation was dissolved by Presbytery, having continued over twelve years. None of these was without spiritual fruit,

The total number of additions was one hundred and twenty-two; sixty-four of them on confession. Mr. Gillett has labored since at Erie and Union, Penn., and has now the charge of the church at Kane, in the same State.

After the dismissal of Mr. Gillett, the church sustained another severe loss in the withdrawal of several of its members to the Episcopal church. At the close of the vacancy following his pastorate, the number of communicants had been reduced to ninety-two.

On the 28th of May, 1866, you presented a call to your present pastor, then pastor of the church of Saugnoit, N. Y. He commenced his ministry among you on the 29th of July, just ten years ago yesterday, and in due time was installed your *third pastor* by the Presbytery of Grand River. Never shall I forget the cordial and earnest welcome with which you met your new pastor. Coming from a loving and thoughtful people, from whom he tore himself only by resolute persistency, in obedience, as he believed, to the call of Providence; feeling, as he should feel if called to-day to separate from you, the sadness of parting from a beloved church, and of giving into other hands a long cherished work, the trial would have been doubly severe had not your kind words and loving deeds assured him that he had come to another people, whose hearts were open to him and his; and to another work for which the Great Head of the Church had prepared the way. I could not but cherish the firm conviction in those first days of my ministry among you, that you had given me your confidence and love, and were sustaining me by your prayers and co-operation. Nor have these ten years proved false the faith which I reposed in you, nor have they disappointed me in my charge. You have aided me in my work; you have dealt kindly with my failings; you have stood by me in my trials; you have sympathized with me and my household in our sorrows; you have cheered us with many acts of thoughtful love; you have held fast to me, as my heart has held fast to you, until to-day, I believe, we can take each other's hands with a warmer grasp and the expression of a stronger attachment than that with which you gave me the right hand of welcome when ten years ago the Presbytery solemnized the bonds between us, and made us, as Pastor and People, one in the Lord.

We have passed through many changes since I came among you. We have met on occasions of joy and in seasons of sorrow. We have said farewell to many beloved in the Lord; and we have welcomed new faces and new hearts to the communion of our Zion. We have had days of discouragement, because the work of Christ seemed to make little progress, and glorious eras when we have thanked God and taken courage. Although in much we have failed to preach, or pray, or work for Christ as becomes our high mission as his church, yet God has blessed our mutual labors. In each of these years He has encouraged us with some evident fruits of His Spirit; and once and again He has given us an abundant harvest.

In the year 1867, fifteen were added to us. In the early part of 1868, the way having been prepared by a manifest increase of interest

in our congregation, the Baptist and Congregational churches united with us in holding a protracted meeting, conducted by your pastor and Rev. Mr. Roberts of the Baptist church. There were additions to all the churches; forty-three to our own, forty of them on confession. In 1873, we invited Rev. H. H. Wells, Missionary of the Presbytery of Cleveland, to hold a series of meetings with us. The Congregational, Baptist and Methodist churches accepted our invitation to unite in this special effort. During that year sixty-three were added, fifty-nine on confession. Large as was this ingathering, no reaction followed; the number added in the years following being more than in those preceding.

The total number of additions to our communion during these ten years is two hundred and one; one hundred and forty-three of these on confession. The present number of our communicants is two hundred and thirty-one; of whom fifty six are of those who constituted the church when I became your pastor; one hundred and seventy-five of the new members whom God has added to our household. I have attended ninety funerals, officiated at sixty-six marriages and baptized seventy-seven of your children.

In 1871, our organ was purchased, and in 1874, the ladies repaired our church edifice, and transformed it into our present cheerful sanctuary. Many other matters of interest have transpired in these ten years, which I might record for you. But we are reviewing to-day, not specially my own pastorate, but the work of all the faithful men whom God has sent to you since that day of weakness but of hope when your church was organized.

During the fifty-five years, the total number received into the communion of your church is seven hundred and ten; four hundred and forty of them on confession.

There are other interesting facts which claim a brief notice in this Historical Review. The history of your Sabbath School has been prepared by another hand, and will be read to you this evening. A statement of your benevolent contributions would be interesting and instructive; but for many of the earlier years we have no record of these. So far as we can learn, this church has contributed regularly to the principal causes of Christian benevolence. On Jan. 1st, 1874, we adopted the plan of a weekly offering in place of the occasional collection. Our plan was so far modified in April of the present year as to assign to each Sabbath a definite object. Under this weekly system your offerings have increased fifty per cent.

The Ladies Benevolent Society was organized in 1861, and has ever since been an earnest and efficient helper in our work, aiding the trustees frequently in times of pecuniary exigency, furnishing and beautifying our sanctuary, and sending gifts and boxes of clothing to needy missionries in the West. As first organized, it was a Young Ladies Sewing Society; afterwards a general sewing society. It gradually assumed its present form in connection with our Church Socials.

The Woman's Missionary Society was organized in 1860, and has added much to the missionary interest and contributions of our church.

A new impulse has been given to this society in the consecration of one of its members to the foreign missionary work—Miss Belle Marsh, who expects to sail, before many weeks, for Japan, as missionary of our society, and one of the missionaries of the Woman's Society of Cleveland Presbytery.

The Maternal Association was organized in 1869, and holds regular monthly meetings. This association is growing steadily in usefulness, and is exerting a quiet but important influence in promoting the work of a true, earnest, Christian education. A ladies' prayer-meeting has also been sustained for many years.

A weekly prayer-meeting was, probably, sustained with more or less regularity, from the time of the organization of the church, but the first reliable information that we can obtain of it is immediately after the erection of the church edifice. For many years, it was held regularly in a room enclosed for the purpose above the vestibule of the church. Toward the close of Mr. Waldo's ministry, owing to differences prevailing in the congregation, the meeting had declined so far that the following action was taken by the church at the commencement of Mr. Pomeroy's pastorate: "Resolved, That the church should sustain a weekly prayer-meeting." We are not informed how far this resolution accomplished what is said to have been its object, by impressing on the minds of all the communicants their personal duty to assist in sustaining this meeting. It is a resolution which might, profitably, be enacted every year, and carefully considered by every one who neglects the "Place where prayer is wont to be made."

Our present chapel was purchased in 1860, and has ever since been our Place of Prayer. And who can say how much the chapel has influenced the church, and the weekly prayer helped in the sanctuary worship. How large a measure of the Divine blessing in those past years may have been God's answer to the earnest prayers in that little consecrated room.

But we cannot, by words like these, measure the labors or the success of a church of Christ. "The Kingdom of God is within you." The true work of the church is written by the Spirit of God in human hearts. Its record is on high. Who can sum up in figures the result of the prayers, and the praises, and the preached word for near three thousand Sabbaths? Who can estimate the edification of Christ's people by the word and the sacrament? How shall we measure the moral and spiritual influence that has gone forth from this House of God to the community and the world? Not until the disciples of Christ here assembled, and those who have gone from us to other fields of labor, with all whom their faithful word has taught of Jesus and helped forward to glory, are gathered in the church above, can we comprehend the magnitude of that work begun by those seven men and women of God, who in that private room, so humbly, yet so prayerfully, on the 7th day of December, 1821, laid the foundations of our beloved Zion.

The way which we have reviewed has been from first to last the way in which God has led us. To Him be all our praises. We have not met

to-day to give glory to any man; but thankful for the love of God and the grace of Christ and the communion of the Holy Ghost to set up our Ebenezer; for "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

And what shall the Divine leadings be in the future? God has given us our increased numbers, our larger influence, our broader field in this growing community, what will he enable us to accomplish for Him? We leave the question with Him who has been our helper. The mercies of the past assure us for that which is to come; "Jehovah Jireh," "The Lord will provide." Only let us give ourselves, to-day, with renewed consecration to Christ, Christ's church, and Christ's work. Let this anniversary season be a day of high Christian resolve. Let this Centennial year be a year of new devotion to that great cause for which the church has been established in the world, the glory of God, and the saving in that glory of the souls whom Christ has purchased with His blood.

And let us learn, from the trials and reverses of the past, to elevate our church in our regard. Let us love her with renewed affection. Let our hearts cling to her with all the strength of the children's love for their spiritual mother. God grant that there may never again be dissensions or divisions in our Zion. But may the feelings of our hearts to our beloved church find expression in such words as those by which the old Psalmist uttered his quenchless affection to the old Jerusalem: "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning."

As I have turned over the faded pages of the old records, I have been as one studying over sepulchers and writing among tombs. And as I have asked, "The fathers, where are they?" and have read the answer in the finished work of this minister, in the laying aside of the office of this elder, in the going home of this and that disciple of Christ, the thought that for many days had been looking back glanced forward, and I stood, a half century hence, among the children who shall take the place of those who now are enduring and striving for Christ. And I asked, The pastor of this church, where will he be then? And the answer came from those who, in hall or in store, had preached the word in the early days of our Zion. And I asked again, this dearly beloved church, this congregation of worshippers, where will they be then? And the graves of those seven responded, and the records of departures on those old church books answered me.

Yet, thanks to the gospel which we preach, and the light and immortality which it brings to light, this lesson of the past is not a weight of gloom, but an anchor of hope, sure and steadfast. For the apocalypse of a future not of this world unfolds its glorious visions before our faith as we press toward the goal. In place of this our sanctuary, we behold the house of many mansions. In place of this preached word is the fruit of the tree of life. In place of our prayers and praises is the new song before the throne. In place of our precious communion here is the fellowship of the ransomed of the Lord. In place of our striving and waiting and hoping, is the triumph and the welcome and the glory.

And shall God's children murmur that as those who have gone

APPENDIX.

HISTORY OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL, OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ASHTABULA.

PREPARED BY ORRAMEL H. FITCH.

There are no records to show when the first Sabbath school of this church was organized, and the date is unknown. There was probably no regular organization until after the completion of the church building in 1836. About that time a school was formed by Mr. Russel Clark, which was kept up during the Summer months, under his superintendence, until 1842. During this period no record has been preserved, and the number and names of the teachers and scholars cannot now be accurately ascertained. In the Spring of 1842, Mr. Clark requested to be relieved, and O. H. Fitch was elected in his place. The school this year, the first of which there is any record, commenced May 15th, and closed Nov. 27th. The number of classes was eleven and the number of scholars ninety-eight.

In 1843 the school, probably for the first time, was continued, except for two short vacations, during the entire year, as it also was during the two succeeding years. The number of scholars in 1843 had increased to one hundred and forty-eight. From 1846 to 1857 inclusive, with the exception of one year, 1849, when the number of scholars was reported as one hundred and thirty, no record has been preserved.

In the Spring of 1858 the school was thoroughly reorganized and a constitution with rules for its better regulation and efficiency was adopted, which is still in force; though for some of the time its provisions have been sadly neglected or ignored. The number of scholars reported that year was one hundred and thirty-eight. From that time to the present the school has been continued during the entire year.

The number of scholars reported in 1859 was one hundred and fourteen; in 1860, ninety-seven; in 1861, ninety-two. In 1865 the whole

number of scholars enrolled was sixty-eight, of whom twenty-one left before the close of the year. This low state of the school was a true index of the condition of the church at that time. Without a pastor, weak, divided, distracted, discouraged—like Bunyan's Pilgrim, it was struggling in a slough of despond. It was one of the darkest periods in the history of our beloved church. But, thanks be to God, it was but the darkness which preceded the dawn..

In 1866 the school commenced with forty-four scholars, and closed with one hundred and thirty-eight. From that time the annual contributions of the school have averaged forty-two dollars exclusive of extra contributions for special purposes.

The present number of officers, teachers and scholars is one hundred and ninety-one, which is the largest that has ever been entered upon its records.

Though obtained in part from unofficial sources, the following is believed to be a correct list of all the superintendents and their terms of service: Russel Clark was superintendent from the organization to 1842; O. H. Fitch from 1842 to 1845, and in 1849 and 1865; Geo. Hall in 1846 and 1847; John P. Robertson for eleven years at different times, during the period from 1848 to 1868; John Mansfield in 1852; Henry Fassett in 1853; Peter Chamberlain in 1857; C. Avery in 1859; A. F. Hubbard in 1861 and 1862; C. E. Bruce for five years at different times, from 1863 to 1872; Rev. J. M. Gillett in 1864; I. M. Clemens for a part of 1873; E. H. Gilkey, the present superintendent, since the Summer of 1873.